An Epistemological Debate? The Copenhagen School of Security Studies and Some Realist Responses to Waltz's Neorealism

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AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBATE? THE COPENHAGEN SCHOOL OF SECURITY STUDIES AND SOME REALIST RESPONSES TO WALTZ'S NEOREALISM

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Kenneth N. Waltz's masterpiece, *Theory of International Relations*, was published in 1979. Only twelve years later, but importantly after the crucial events of 1989, Barry Buzan published his own version of a theoretical framework for studies in International Relations, in a sample of the vivid realist-neorealist debate[1]. His subtitle, referring to the challenges of the post-cold war era, makes one want to inquire whether this dispute – an intra-paradigm debate, considering the history of the discipline – is still a matter of theoretical substance, or whether it merely pertains to the effects of shifting one's methods of study.

Preliminary Considerations

To proceed to a comparison of the realist and neorealist approaches, one must first establish the frame of reference: that is, on the one hand, the main hypotheses of realism in general, and, on the other hand, Waltz's theory in a nutshell – his major assumptions; the recognized scope of his theory; the structures and the balance of power.

For the realist tradition[2], there are the three assumptions that date back to Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*, whether the monograph is

[1] BARRY BUZAN is a declared realist, as the title of his work proclaims, discussing *People, States and Fear*, in resonance with the title of an earlier work by Waltz: KENNETH N. WALTZ, *Man, State and War. A Theoretical Analysis*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959.

[2] According to Hans J. Morgenthau, there are six principles of political realism: politics is governed by objective laws with roots in human nature; statesmen think and act rationally, according to interest defined as power; this interest dictates and moves international life, although it is itself part of a political and cultural context within which it was formulated; universal moral principles cannot be applied as such, in their abstract formulation, but must be filtered through

cited rightfully or not within the realist paradigm. These are statism, survival, and self-help[3]. Several assumptions are contained within statism: the fact that states are the pre-eminent actors, and the only worthy units for analysis; the claim that states are rational and unitary actors; and the belief than any such unit is an independent political community with juridical authority over its territory. This position has constantly remained under attack as state power is steadfastly undermined from above and from below, in what have been described as the mutually enhancing flows of globalization and regionalization. The theoretical position of realism[4], constantly centered on self-interested states, which compete constantly for power or security, has also opened the way to various criticisms, as Machiavellianism in the actions states may take in the name of necessity has been attacked on many occasions. With states as the preferred units of analysis, realists maintain that one's economic and especially military power alone count as instruments for international behavior. This accounts for the self-help environment, but has been considered rather a poor excuse for perpetuating the status-quo; in the famous words of Alexander Wendt, „anarchy is what states make of it"[5]. The realists' post-cold war prediction was the resurgence of overt great power competition in a multipolar, dangerous world. So far however, they agree that unipolarity remains the case, and the only novelty appears to be the additional emphasis on non-conventional threats to security, particularly after September 11th, 2001[6].

Neorealism purports to move beyond classical realism, including a remarkable effort to produce empirically testable statements and stricter definitions of key terms such as system, power, national interest, equilibrium, and structure, intertwined with a comparative analysis of competing paradigms

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the concrete circumstances of time and place; there should be no confusion of a nation's prevalent moral principles with some abstract natural right, all our judgments must be based on computations of interest, since interests are easier to quantify; lastly, one must observe the proclaimed autonomy of the political sphere. See HANS J. MORGENTHAU, „Chapter 1: Theory and Practice of International Politics", in: *Idem*, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1955 [1948], pp. 3-13.

[3] Synthetically, these are explained in TIMOTHY DUNNE, „Realism", in: John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, pp. 118-119.

[4] As interpreted, for instance, by STEPHEN M. WALT, „International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110, Spring 1998, p. 38.

[5] ALEXANDER WENDT, „Collective Identity Formation and the International State", *American Political Science Review*, 88: 2, June 1994, p. 338.

[6] The theory of hegemonic stability of Charles P. Kindleberger, for instance, acts in validation of such an observation, as well as in justification of post-cold war American foreign policy. See STEFANO GUZZINI, *Realism şi relaţii internaţionale: Povestea fără sfârşit a unei morţi anunţate. realismul în relaţiile internaţionale şi în economia politică internaţională*, Institutul European, Iaşi, 2000, pp. 289-303.

in the theory of international relations. This is particularly true of Waltz's work[7], who sets out to define and clarify the concept of structure. He does so by specifying for each structure its ordering principle, the functions of its units, and the distribution of capabilities among these. Central to Waltz's theory is the celebrated idea that of the two possible ordering principles, hierarchy or anarchy, the international system is based on the consequences of the latter. More exactly, two types of structural order exist in his view. There is the hierarchical relationship – based on the degree of authority or on the function performed by the elements of a structure, which is seen at its best in domestic politics. And there is, alternately, the anarchical state in which our international system perpetuates itself, for lack of a comparably authoritative super-governmental institutions, or of any power-generating center. As Waltz himself confirms,

> Nationally, the force of a government is exercised in the name of right and justice. Internationally, the force of a state is employed for the sake of its own protection and advantage. [...] National politics is the realm of authority, of administration, and of law. International politics is the realm of power, of struggle, and of accommodation. The international realm is preeminently a political one. The national realm is variously described as being hierarchic, vertical, centralized, heterogeneous, directed, and contrived; the international realm, as being anarchic, horizontal, decentralized, homogeneous, undirected, and mutually adaptive.[8]

Where the controlling principle is (domestic) hierarchy, the functions of the units are widely differentiated, as in any rational administration. By contrast, where the anarchic principle reigns, since states and other units become the formal equals of each other, their functions are also inevitably similar. However, despite their comparable functions (goals), which continue to range, in the realist tradition, from self-preservation up to world domination, the distribution of capabilities among the units varies largely. The capabilities Waltz lists are quite varied themselves: some are military, but others are economic, such as levels of industrialization and productivity, GNP, national income, income on a per capita basis, etc., as shown in the appendix of his book.

Various Critiques

Andrew Linklater[9] lists some main differences between realism and neorealism. Above all, there is Waltz's critique of reductionist theories which presume to explain the system by understanding its sovereign parts. So he

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[7] KENNETH N. WALTZ, *Theory of International Relations*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1979.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 113.

[9] ANDREW LINKLATER, „Neo-Realism in Theory and Practice," in: Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 242-245.

proposes a more serious analysis, in his opinion inadequately developed by the classical realists: the systemic constraints of international-level anarchy which explain why very diverse states function identically in their foreign policy behavior. Yet the relationship between the units and the system remains quite unclear even under Waltz's theoretical endeavor. Distinguishing the theory of international relations from sheer foreign policy, Waltz produces an essentially epistemological work, purporting to finally abstract international relations from economics, domestic politics, and culture. While ignoring many factors that were central to realism, Waltz assumes that the regularities and repetitions in international politics are clues to the operation of deep structural constraints in a system with a precisely defined structure. He differentiates between international and domestic politics according to three criteria: the ordering principle of the system (anarchy and an inherent security dilemma forcing states into self-help strategies, while domestically the ordering principle is hierarchy), the character of the units (functionally alike), and the distribution of their capabilities (unequal). Waltz, surpassing the classical realists, makes a slight concession to modernity: economic interdependence exists, but it is low compared with the level of economic and social integration found within states. Another dubious remark is his reference to the law of liberal democracies not fighting each other, which challenges his entire theoretical construct:

> International stability may come to depend less on the number of great powers, or on the nature of their destructive capabilities, than on the principles of international relations they espouse and the moral constraints which they recognize.[10]

While he identifies trends, and develops an entire theory of the bipolar system, US hegemonic power, nuclear deterrence, and the balance of power, accounting for reconfigurations within the international system as transitory, and moreover immaterial to its ordering principle, Waltz's quest for methodological rigor leads to a poor prediction of the timing of future events. This has always been the focal point of criticism addressed to realism and neorealism alike, the more so, as it was said, since 1989 and the end of the Cold War[11].

Hence the main difference from realism is that neorealism absolutely discourages the analysis of unit-driven change. In Linklater's words, we either face Waltz's orientation towards manipulation and control, or Morgenthau's practical realism with an orientation towards diplomatic understanding and

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[10] *Ibidem*, p. 248.

[11] See for example the attack upon „grand theories" performed by JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, „International Politics and Political Theory", in: Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 272-273.

consensus[12]. But even structural theories (neo-Kantian and others) have to criticize neorealist assumptions[13]: Francis Fukuyama and Michael Doyle argue that the trends for democratization testify for deep currents of global change, consensus prevailing over force; neoliberal institutionalists note that while territorial pursuits are no longer necessary for economic development and co-operation becomes a rational strategy, modern warfare is now too costly to be an acceptable conflict termination tool, at least in the industrialized world; John Mueller parallels its decline to that of the 19th century disgrace of duels; James Lee Ray puts it on the same level with slavery, which was also eventually banned as a consequence of moral developments[14]. On average, what is now taking place is a reversal of the preferences, ranking low politics higher than matters of security and military force that belonged once to the high politics.

Thus the critics of neorealism rally against the latter's four major assumptions: that strategic factors shape power relations and any pacification is temporary; that cultural forces, beliefs and traditions are denied any central role in determining recurrent patterns in international relations; that the system should be studied in isolation from its units; and that the emphasis of the theory of international relations should still be on power and security.

> They argue that neorealism is too quick to endorse prevailing realities, and its legitimation of the status quo should come to an end.[15]

Another criticism stems from highlighting the internal contradictions of the theory. Indeed, the latter cannot assess whether units or system prevail in the framing of future events, so decides to study the system in isolation and unjustly badmouths reductionist theories. John Ruggie observes that neorealism did not explain the shift from the medieval international society to the modern system of states, an example of changes in the ordering principle by a metamorphosis of the principle of separability[16]. An entire new school of

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[12] ANDREW LINKLATER, „Neo-Realism in Theory and Practice," in: Ken Booth and Steve Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-245.

[13] TIMOTHY DUNNE, „Realism", in: John Baylis and Steve Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 120.

[14] *Ibidem*.

[15] ANDREW LINKLATER, „Neo-Realism in Theory and Practice," in: Ken Booth and Steve Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

[16] JOHN GERARD RUGGIE, „What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge", in: *International Organization*, 52:4, Summer 1998, pp. 855-85. Ruggie portrays his preferred manner to counter such conventional approaches, with too many gratuitous assumptions (perhaps even falsifiable with empirical findings). He suggests problematizing the interests and identities of all relevant actors involved; reframing and incorporating the bases of social action, which, as the social order and the principle of separability, are intersubjective; finally, to reconsider time and space as variables which help establish international structure as contingent practice rather that primary assumption, incontrovertibly interconnected with social action throughout its transformation.

international relations developed based on the thesis that, contrary to the realist claim, sovereignty is socially constructed. The proponents of the constructivist paradigm thus notice that the meaning and importance of sovereignty change over time, state egotism being thus an acquired feature rather than a given[17].

Despite such criticism, an important feature of neorealism has been its decisive rejection of reductionism. In fact, while proceeding to show why a new theory was needed, and by giving away glimpses of his own perspective, Waltz has criticized quite a few thinkers of the realist school. His inquiry would require an extensive examination of the texts under review for counter-arguments, or at least – as proposed in the following section – a panoramic view of the quoted theorists, touching on a few key elements, which were identified by Waltz himself.

The Intra-Paradigm Debate

The debate for a „theory of international relations" monopolizes a large portion of the argument between realists and neorealists, and indeed of the inter-paradigm debate of the entire discipline. Raymond Aron complained about the lack of rigor in the study of international relations, and decided that the late start of the discipline could not justify the frantic, chaotic, indiscriminate accumulation of writings on the subject. When he distinguished between theory as contemplative knowledge and theory as „systhème hypothetico-deductif"[18], Raymond Aron came incredibly close to Waltz's own repeated concerns about having to chose between a more complicated theory (one that, for instance, would have a third alternative to hierarchy and anarchy, and would describe reality better), or one that would simply approximate world politics, but would be capable of better predictions, as a more manageable framework[19]. Whatever its other faults, Waltz's work constitutes a formidable epistemological effort to establish the scope and even existence as a discipline of international relations:

> The problem seen in the light of the theory is not to say how to manage the world, including its great powers, but to say how the possibility that great powers will constructively manage international affairs varies as systems change[20].

[17] Quoting Alexander Wendt and Richard K. Ashley, in: TIMOTHY DUNNE, „Realism", in John Baylis and Steve Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[18] RAYMOND ARON, „Qu'est-ce qu'une théorie des relations internationales", *Études Politiques*, NRF Gallimard, Paris, 1972, pp. 357-381.

[19] KENNETH N. WALTZ, *op. cit.*, 1979, p. 116.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 210.

Nonetheless, even this claim has been challenged in the realist school by James N. Rosenau[21] and Quincy Wright[22]. If in 1955 Quincy Wright described the field of international relations as an emerging discipline, forged by history and logic alike, he also developed his own definition of a good [deductive] theory of international relations:

> [It] means a comprehensive, coherent and self-correcting body of knowledge contributing to the understanding, the prediction, the evaluation and the control of the relations among states and of the conditions of the world.[23]

Waltz does produce a parsimonious theory, but despite his attempt to address virtually all the points above, his is a prediction of possible flows, rather than one that tempts time prognoses, and thus one of a rather poor utility. In any case, Quincy Wright gives a few hints that may be useful in the treatment of international relations and in its development as a distinct discipline. He lists four basic intellectual perspectives, corresponding to history, art, science and philosophy, and divides all social reality into the actual, the possible, the probable, and the desirable. The actual refers to description, the possible to speculation, the probable to prediction, and the desirable to ethical reflection and normative valuation[24]. One must note that due to the habitual interdisciplinarity of the theory of international relations, both Waltz and the realists manage to include all four categories in what is supposedly a positivist approach.

Even more sternly, James N. Rosenau distinguishes sharply between empirical and normative (ethical) theories and he insists that they remain separate. Instead, his own must be an empirical and inductive theory, one that is general, and – most importantly – testable[25].

Thus Waltz fulfills a little of each one's requirements. His *Theory of International Relations* is a deductive model that seeks empirical virtues, but like any other in the realist tradition, ends up with normative hues: it would be better if we all could think in terms of interest, security, and anarchy, and then

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[21] Please refer to JAMES N. ROSENAU, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*, rev. ed., Frances Pinter, London, 1980, pp. 19-31.

[22] See QUINCY WRIGHT, „Development of a General Theory of International Relations", in: Horace V. Harrison (ed.), *The Role of Theory in International Relations*, Van Nostrand, Princeton, NJ, 1964, pp. 20-23.

[23] *Apud* JAMES E. DOUGHERTY and ROBERT L. PFALTZGRAFF, Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations. A Comparative Survey*, Longman, New York, 1996, p. 23. Even so, the span of these virtues remains highly questionable, given the professed lack of explanatory power of neorealism (see below).

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 45.

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

predictions will be more accurate[26]. Moreover, the entire discussion of the virtues of bipolar over multipolar systems cannot be tested by experience, hence it is based on the theorist's assumptions of the amount of insecurity in the international system, of the number of actors to whom states must allocate their attention, and of the non-testable, but atrociously precedented destructive power of nuclear weapons.

When discussing power and international behavior, one may challenge the quality of prediction as influenced by the mere definition of the term, whose many meanings and attributes are a concern for Stanley Hoffmann[27] and Robert Gilpin[28], among many others. Waltz himself stops after having proclaimed that an actor is powerful insofar as he has the ability to influence another actor to do, or not to do, something desired by that actor.

Nonetheless, many theories have lived well without too big an ado over the definition of this crucial concept. For instance, the celebrated work[29] of Edward Hallett Carr, originally published in 1939 and having passed unattacked by Waltz, has been re-examined by the neoliberal institutionalists and found of great use, despite the completely different circumstances of the world politics in the age of EU (hopefully) enlargement. Hoffmann, on the other hand, has stood under steep criticism by Waltz, under the famous accusation of having built a reductionist framework. Hoffmann is said to have confused changes of systems with changes within systems, and Waltz's verdict is clear:

> 'System' then does not explain anything; rather the exhaustive description of everything describes the system, and a new system is said to emerge every time there is reason to change the description in any important respect.[30]

One must reckon that Waltz falls perhaps in the other extreme, denying that systems change and producing a most conservative, self-contained theory, where any development is simply a feeble vibration of the [bipolar] arrangement. His critique is more convincing when he shows how Hoffmann purportedly crammed everything into his notion of structure: attributes and behavior of units, patterns of power, ambitions and means of rulers, the extent of national integration, the properties of the political institutions - all these push

[26] About the same argument as the one circulated by HANS J. MORGENTHAU, „Chapter 1: Theory and Practice of International Politics", in: *Idem, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1955 [1948], pp. 3-13.

[27] See STANLEY HOFFMANN, „An American Social Science: International Relations", *Daedalus* CVI, Summer, pp. 41-60.

[28] See ROBERT GILPIN, „The Richness of the Realist Tradition", in: Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 301-21.

[29] EDWARD HALLETT CARR, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Harper & Row (Torchbooks), New York, 1964.

[30] KENNETH N. WALTZ, *op. cit.*, 1979, p. 45.

him into the area of historical sociology and reductionism, while confusing the individual, the state, and the international level of analysis expounded since Morgenthau.

Not even Raymond Aron is left untouched when he writes that „the principal actors have predetermined the system more than they have been predetermined by it"[31], he analyses the system by constantly moving inside and out of the systemic framework, by using an inside-out analysis. Again, one must defend the classical realists who seek to include all intervening factors in order to predict more, and more accurately, however complicated the framework may become.

In the realist-neorealist debate, one must also keep in mind that both approaches uphold the status quo (as „surviving vestiges" of the Cold War era), and that one must look into how the theorists propose to apply their predictions. Waltz's inferences about neocolonialism[32], for instance, versus the cases of Morton A. Kaplan[33] and Henry A. Kissinger[34] are quite significant, as the two theorists he criticizes produce practical advice and evaluations of the previous systems. Kaplan for instance lists six rules that define the balance of power system[35], a system, that is, which he strongly disapproves for its internal inconsistencies. Nonetheless, he is ruled out as well for claiming that the variables of a system represent its content. More importantly involved in foreign policy making, Henry A. Kissinger is also under scrutiny. Summing up Kissinger's conclusions, Waltz writes:

> [...] Kissinger had earlier agreed with Morgenthau in believing that the preservation of peace and the maintenance of international stability depend on the attitudes and internal characteristics of states. Kissinger defined an international order as „legitimate" if it is accepted by all of the major powers and as „revolutionary" if one or more of them rejects it. In contrast to a legitimate order, a revolutionary order is one in which one or more of the major states refuses to deal with other states according to the conventional rules of the game. The quality of the order depends on the dispositions of the states that constitute it. A legitimate international order tends toward stability and peace; a revolutionary international order, toward instability and war. Revolutionary states make international systems revolutionary; a revolutionary system is one that contains one or more revolutionary states.[36]

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[31] *Apud* IBIDEM, p. 47.

[32] *Ibidem*, pp. 147-148.

[33] See MORTON A. KAPLAN, *System and Process in International Politics*, Wiley, New York, 1964.

[34] See HENRY A. KISSINGER, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Harper, New York, 1957.

[35] *Apud* KENNETH N. WALTZ, *op. cit.*, 1979, p. 51. Waltz then synthesizes these rules on the following page, as follows: „A. Act as cheaply as possible to increase capabilities; B. Protect yourself against others acting according to rule A; C. Act to maintain the number of units essential to the system".

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 63.

It is easy to see where Kissinger has erred with respect to Waltz's requirements. Practically, we would always face a revolutionary order, but Waltz's anarchy does not necessarily lead to anarchy and war, when such checks as hegemony and bipolarity or mutual nuclear deterrence are in place. It is in fact precisely this „bias", seeing the world as a big Prisoner's Dilemma game, that places Waltz in the camp of defensive neorealists, with Robert Jervis, Stephen van Evera, Stephen Walt, and Jack Snyder[37], as opposed to offensive neorealists like John Mearsheimer and Randall Schweller[38], who see states on a permanent quest for more power at the expense of their rivals, with no constraints from composition of the international structure.

Security Studies and their Debate with Waltz's Neorealism

Similar judgments of the basic anarchic structure of the international scene are held by other realists, keeping clear the distinction between the horrific Hobbesian state and anarchy as a decentralized form of political order. Thus Buzan[39] does accept the anarchy principle and molds his own concept of security accordingly. While he refuses to give a synthetic definition of the elusive term, he recognizes the areas that affect the security of human collectivities as the military, the political, the economic, the societal and environmental sectors[40]. On top of these, he names three major conditions induced by the absence of central government at the international level:

> 1. States are the principal referent object of security because they are both the framework of order and the highest source of governing authority [hence] the dominating policy concern with 'national' security.[41]

[37] See ROBERT A. JERVIS, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics*, 30: 2, 1978, pp. 167-214; STEPHEN VAN EVERA, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1999; STEPHEN M. WALT, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987; JACK SNYDER, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991.

[38] JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War" in: Michael Brown, Owen Coté, Sean Lynn-Jones, and Steven Miller (eds.), *Theories of War and Peace*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998; RANDALL L. SCHWELLER, "Neorealism's Status-Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?", in: Benjamin Franklin (ed.), *Realism: Restatements and Renewal*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, pp. 90-120.

[39] For easier reference we shall submit Barry Buzan as the main proponent of the security concepts generally attributed to the Copenhagen School. For a further discussion of the conceptual apparatus of the Copenhagen School, we refer to BARRY BUZAN, OLE WÆVER, JAAP DE WILDE, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1998. Here the authors discuss the five dimensions of security, the stages up to the securitization of an issue, and the challenge for regionalizing security, with additional details.

[40] BARRY BUZAN, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed., Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1991, p. 19.

[41] *Ibidem*, p. 22.

That is, an approach where states are the dominant actors.

> 2. [Yet] the dynamics of national security are highly relational and interdependent between states. [...] The idea of international security is therefore best used to refer to the systemic conditions that influence the ways in which states make each other feel more or less secure. Individual national securities can only be fully understood when considered in relation both to each other and to larger patterns of relations in the system as a whole.[42]

That is, a systemic approach.

> 3. Given the durability of anarchy, the practical meaning of security can only be constructed sensibly if it can be made operational within an environment in which competitive relations are inescapable. [...] Among other things, this means that under anarchy, security can only be relative, never absolute. [...] If there is ever a structural shift out of anarchy [into harmony or hegemony], then the entire framework of the security problematique would have to be redefined.[43]

That is, a system where only relative gains count for power computations and consequently for decision-making.

Waltz's references to security were limited to the section on collective security systems, where he is led to draw uncomfortable comparisons between the UN and League of Nations and the old balance of power system, in a total contempt for the multi- (five-) polar system. His claim that the most important means of control in security matters are

> […] to interdict the use of force by the threat of force, to oppose force with force, to influence the policies of the state by the threat or use of force […][44],

offers a common gist with the realists – in that interdependence is viewed with suspicion – and an example of how anarchy places the burden of the management of international affairs on states within a bipolar system.

An important point of difference from realists and a contestation with Buzan's theory occurs when Waltz affirms, in a previous chapter, that:

> In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquility, profit, and power. Because power is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions. They cannot let power, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. The goal that system encourages them to seek is security. Increased power may not serve that end. [...] If states wished to maximize power, they would join the stronger side, and we would see not balances forming but a world hegemony forged. This does not happen because balancing, not bandwagoning, is the behavior induced by the system. The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system.[45]

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[42] *Ibidem*, pp. 22-23.
[43] *Ibidem*, p. 23.
[44] KENNETH N. WALTZ, *op. cit.*, 1979, p. 209.
[45] *Ibidem*, p. 126.

A difference occurs between the two theorists on the importance of state power as a means or an end to achieve security. While, as we have seen, Waltz can see even the reverse of this power seeking for fear of preventive wars, Buzan is not as categorical and maintains the power variable as an important factor in his predictions. The table offered by Buzan[46], correlating socio-political cohesion and state power to predict their vulnerability to threats of national security, revives the revisited geopolitical formulae for computing national power as a function of outer and inner perceptions of leadership, military and economic outputs. Nonetheless, this is a perfect example of a calculus that Waltz would certainly not perform within his structural realism, but would classify as a dubious mixture of criteria pertaining to reductionist theories.

If Barry Buzan were to give a definition of security, it would include a discussion of the „pursuit of freedom from threat", which appears to have been translated as the right (of the Bush administration) to wage pre-emptive war. Indeed, the discussion here meets another debate, on the substance of terms like „national interest" and „national security". Like Waltz, Buzan agrees to place security at the center of the units' preoccupations; nevertheless, his explanation is slightly different, as security is about „the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity"[47]. So, as in Arnold Wolfers's definition, security includes the cardinal matter of values, something Waltz did not mention in this rather Schmittian concept of the political.

In short, Wolfers suggests that most people consider security, together with power and wealth (two other concepts on which one may dwell), values of great importance in international affairs. He further notes the identification of these values – taken together – with the notion of national interest:

> Security in an objective sense measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.[48]

The reference is made to national decision-makers, calling into mind the critique to the realist idea of states as rational and unitary actors. Arnold Wolfers himself observes that in actual practice nations never pursue uniform policies of security[49]. To confirm his own line of argument, Wolfers then mentions the findings of several other theorists. Walter Lippmann writes that a nation is secure as long as it doesn't have to sacrifice core values when it wishes to avoid war. Also, if this nation is attacked, it is able to maintain the

[46] BARRY BUZAN, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[47] *Ibidem*, p. 25.

[48] ARNOLD WOLFERS, „'National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol", *Political Science Quarterly*, 67: 4, 1952, p. 485.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. 486.

values by winning such a war. But arguing that they are trying to maintain their values, a nation may attempt world domination. So where is the limit? Does a state's security depend on whether it can deter an attack or on whether it can defend itself against it? Surprisingly for an author so disappointed in the idealist League of Nations, Hans Morgenthau admits forceful response to violent attack, not preventive war[50].

Following Machiavelli, or at least the vulgar understanding of his works, the protection and preservation of national core values have been at the top of any list of objectives, but now we realize that the means that we pursue must be taken into account as well. Security in relation with other countries is achievable by alliances, armaments or by neutrality. Which of these will prevail is a matter of circumstances and dissuasion from use and threat of force by the most effective and fashionable international regimes.

Indeed, to try and give operational meaning to such a catch-all term, not to mention in the all-pervasive vagueness of social science terms, can easily cast anyone in the most acute version of relativism. But beyond the linguistic matters, one must notice that states are subject to many forces, of all the three celebrated levels of neorealist analysis, when they perform the task of interpreting national interest. Some are contemporary, others are a continuance of their predecessors' policies, and it is never decided whether one is more captive to such tradition in matters of trade or of foreign policy, for instance. The matter of human decision-making provides ample space to communitarian and reflectivist theses, as theorists of international relations often note:

> They interpret national interest as a result of their cultural training, values, and the data made available to them as decision makers.[51]

With the current shift from national to international security interests, Wolfers' breakdown of national interest in security plus wealth plus power is quite useful. Useful are also his caution words on the zero-sum games to be played between economic welfare and sheer constantly modernized armament. The shift to economic competition might even quell the famous security dilemma, maybe inviting other side effects, hopefully more peaceful.

Consider the outcome of joining an alliance. On the one hand, one can share the costs of security (in an 'economies of scale' approach: costs to the alliance are smaller than the sum of costs to individual members), thus relieving national actors of some pressure on the civilian economy when the decision to upgrade armament is made. On the other hand, the alignment to common decisions and threats – that grounds behavior within the alliance – may

[50] HANS J. MORGENTHAU, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-71.

[51] JAMES E. DOUGHERTY and ROBERT PFALTZGRAFF, Jr., „Realism-Neorealism: Limitations and Contributions", in: *Idem*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

significantly reduce state autonomy and increase the costs of defection, somehow in line with liberal institutionalist literature. Such values as alliance membership and autonomy are thus increasingly computed – even by the inveterate realists – in terms of each one's marginal utility.

In the meanwhile, upon a simple examination of the security agendas in various countries, one could detect a canopy of perceptions about what should be securitized, what constitutes a threat and what is in general the local security interest. The degree of sophistication in detecting and prioritizing technological and informational gaps for instance is appalling; especially from nations where there is ongoing debate about brain drain and lack of productive competitiveness. Instead, the traditional concern with potentially annoying neighbors is not in danger of being understated. On the contrary, some of the texts could even give birth to diplomatic incidents, if not read by decision-makers with similar activities, who evaluate correctly the 'menace' behind closed doors. Far still from globalization, for some decision centers regionalism works better as a paradigm, and the legendary quip about understanding each others' jokes is a perfect illustration of such states of fact.

By ironical situations, bound to evolve into professional diplomatic relations and better care in elaborating public documents, the matter of what is national interest will continue, giving cause to cautions of mass manipulation and old claims by new political alternatives. Realism is bound to react in a significant adaptive way to the questions it asks of itself and asked of it since day one. Summarized, some of these are:

> […] the interaction and behavior of human beings as decision makers, the nature of power, the goals of foreign policy, the techniques for measuring and managing power, the impact of environmental factors on political behavior, the purposes and practices that ought to guide moral leaders, and the impact of structures of alternative international systems.[52]

Nevertheless, globalization of threats is catching up with every international actor. The same Copenhagen School of security studies has thus proposed, in addition to the defense of the traditional political and military sphere of 'interest', particular attention to economic, societal and environmental security.

More precisely, in contemporary security analysis studies, while *military security* issues must be concerned primarily with national defense, one must note the changing functions of the armed forces, increasingly involved in peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention domestically and most often abroad. The *political* notion of *security*, usually linked to state sovereignty and to its dominant ideology, is extending to supranational entities, disintegration

[52] *Ibidem*, p. 93.

becoming the most horrific threat. The *economic security sector* is increasingly elusive, due to the increasing number of multinational firms, to the quasi-unpredictable daily fluctuations of market economy and consequently to the distant thresholds of securitization. The *societal security sector* refers to the

> […] large-scale collective entities that can function independent of the state, such as nations and religions. [...] Thus, whether migrants or rival identities are securitized depends upon whether the holders of the collective identity take a relative close mind or a relatively open-minded view of how their identity is constituted and maintained. The abilities to maintain and reproduce language, a set of behavioral customs, or a conception of ethnic purity can all be cast in terms of survival.[53]

The Austrian nationalist fears sanctioned in 2001, and indeed continuing European cautions about the rhythm of in-taking immigration can be seen as instances of societal securitization. The influx of North African immigration into Southern Europe causes rebuttals of religious securitization in countries otherwise proud of valuing tolerance and institutional secularization. It is a matter of how quickly such values acquire what Wolfers calls, in a slightly different context, „new national values requiring protection themselves"[54]. Besides, following Wolfers's distinction, to increase wealth and power, and even – legislation-permitting – the might of one's military forces, perhaps the national interest of an ageing Europe should emphasize the selection of competent tax-paying work-force, be it even from abroad.

Finally, *environmental security* refers to endangered species as well as to the prevention of green-house effects; in this context, the notion of sustainable development comes up evermore often at the micro and macro levels of human organization.

One must also pay attention to the necessary distinction between politicization and securitization, weighing the advantages and effectiveness of each, issue by issue. Declaring an issue existentially threatened may mobilize support, along the channels of security legitimacy; but where excessive securitization has been known to generate security dilemmas, not scrutinizing at all has led to ineffectiveness of handling the issue at stake. Again, the golden mean must be observed, keeping in mind the importance of public debate and the advantages of involvement in the political practice. Or, observance of the golden mean is precisely what thinking in terms of a grand theory like Waltz's defensive or Mearsheimer's offensive neorealism prevents. In this sense, the theorists of the Copenhagen School of security studies are much more 'realistic' about the predictive and policy-making powers of its conceptual framework.

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[53] BARRY BUZAN, OLE WÆVER, JAAP DE WILDE, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.
[54] ARNOLD WOLFERS, *art. cit.*, p. 486.

Conclusions

We have seen the main criticisms of realism and neorealism, each and both, disputing the difference between them as perceived by other international relations currents. We have also seen the parallel controversies between theorists in either camp.

So, in short, in what consists the divide? What are the consequences for the predictive powers of realism as a trend of thought?

As was said before, neorealism discourages the analysis of units and of the changes these may entail. As actors multiply, and – despite realist and neorealist claims – globalization steps in, this may well be the safe route to assume. Where only structures matter, Waltz's criticism of the complicatedness of the reductionist frameworks falls, because his own theory maintains both a horizontal structure as among equal actors, and a vertical one caused by the constant switching between domestic and foreign politics. Finally, realist writers have adapted the classical framework better than the neorealist one to the new, post-Cold War, developments, and to new areas of research. In his security studies, Barry Buzan has shown how –for designing a national security policy – neither the realist view, exaggerating the necessity for a powerful state, nor the liberal-utopian approach, seeking trust and order at the international level, are to be preferred. He persuades himself to take a third approach, mindful of the cross-sector linkages and of the perceptions and fears of all the actors involved across the decision-making levels.

Whether or not the approach of the Copenhagen School in the end takes on these almost integrative, functionalist hues, it is both the product of having to face a changing world, and the yield of the intra- and inter-paradigm debates that have transformed the discipline of international relations since its very creation.